PUBLISHER IS TARGET

Attempt to Extort $2 Million Foiled

AKRON, Ohio (UPI) — A $2 million extortion plot against the publisher of the Akron Beacon-Journal was foiled by the arrest of a man claiming to be a member of the American Revolutionary party.

George Wallace Blake, 43, was charged with extortion yesterday after telephone calls were made to area broadcasting stations threatening the kidnaping of Ben Maidenburg, the publisher, and his son.

The telephone caller told newsmen at WJW-TV in Cleveland and WAKR-TV here the kidnapings would be staged unless $2 million was supplied to feed poor people in the Akron area.

THE KIDNAPING threat and the ransom demand were not made to Maidenburg, but the publisher said he received a threatening anonymous telephone call Monday night.

The caller, Maidenburg said, told him, "you've got six hours and 20 minutes." The caller repeated the statement and then hung up.

Shortly after the call to the publisher, Murray Stewart, a newsman at WJW-TV, talked to a man who said Maidenburg or his son, who works for the Akron television station, would be kidnaped unless the money was paid.

Stewart, police said, was able to obtain a telephone number from the man. The number was traced to the home of an Akron neighbor of Blake and Blake was arrested shortly afterwards.

MAIDENBURG said police officers and FBI agents notified him of the threat and established security at Maidenburg's home as well as the homes of other newspaper officials.

The publisher said he was "half worried and half amused" after receiving the telephone call.

"After a while you get hardened to it when you get a lot of nutty calls," he said. "But after the house was jammed with officers I took it more seriously."

Maidenburg said he was unsure whether there was any connection with the incident and the recent abduction of an Atlanta Constitution editor, Reg Murphy, by a man claiming to be an American Revolutionary Army member.

"IT PASSED my mind, but the man hadn't said anything about it to me," he said.

Murphy was released after a $700,000 ransom was paid. Two persons have been charged with the crime.

"I asked around the Beacon-Journal," Maidenburg said. "All I could get was $200 ransom."

Blake, police said, was charged with extortion since, under Ohio law, an extortion threat does not have to be made to the subject of the plot.